

THE LATE CONFLAGRATIONS IN EUROPE AND AMERICA.

BY J. L.—Y.

"Considerations must be—considered."

HARDLY has the ink dried off our essay in the last number of this periodical—than another catastrophe (in Fenchurch-street) startles our mind, and awakens painful sympathies in every breast. Besides the individual sentiments which may agitate us on such occasions—it is the honour of the country, it is the honour of our royal art, which are high being at stake, and a future Tacitus of our times may strongly animadvert on a social condition, where such things could happen; on the state of architecture, in fine, which constructed buildings, where every conflagration might subject its dwellers to involuntary martyrdom! These are stern words—but we *know* such thoughts exist in the *highest* quarters, and it is the sacred duty (?) of an honest journalist to give them unflinching utterance.

It is the besetting sin of the age to consider every radius of our social condition disjointedly, solitarily, isolatedly. Such, however, is not the case. Our pasteboard and gingerbread and cobweb buildings are not *momenta* standing alone; such all is intimately and inmost connected with every thing else around us—every thing the result of sheer (atheistic) egotism and purblind graspingness. And then things become all a chance, a raffle, a lottery. Messrs. A. B. C. have made 7½ per cent. by the building of the Yarmouth Suspension Bridge—but the daughter, or niece, or son of Mr. A. B. or C. have perished on this very same structure, and no bank-check in the world will draw them alive from out of their melancholy, watery grave. If men would think thus—extend the sympathies of consanguinity to every human being (Christianity bids it), then we would at times cut off a *one-half* per cent. or so from our gains; and then, we sincerely believe, many things, all things, would be better.

But we may as well interpolate our own thoughts with those, which have been of late uttered at public meetings and elsewhere with regard to the late fires. "Fire-escapes"—have been again suggested, a multitude of fire-escapes, and a number of *proper* persons (this means, of course, conscientious, religious) to superintend and use them. Without wishing to detract from the adequate utility of this expedient—we must say that it is only a *palliation* and not a radical, curative remedy. This is the way in which we *moderns* proceed constantly. Our artisans possess no adequate walks and play-grounds and public festivals and baths to make them healthy, hale, cheerful; but we throng hospital on hospital, infirmaries of all shades and colours, truss societies, *et hoc genus omne*. The thing is heart-rending in the extreme, but an honest journal for the progress of any (mechanical) art, *must* broach such subjects, bearing on the welfare of the *workers*. Conceding, therefore, an adequate value to the introduction of a forest of fire-escapes—we say, we have conjointly to look to "the *regeneration* of architecture," the *royal* art of old. But if we were to say no further, we would merely repeat one of those numberless (*un-practical*) commonplaces, with which papers are stained and blotched now-a-days. It is the *punctum saliens*—it is the *fulcrum* of Archimedes (on which he challenged to move the world), which is to be found, in architectural or any other regeneration of our social condition. And thus we say, that many, many people could not *exist* at present without their seven and a half per cent. and so on. Of these, we may say with Dante: "*guarda e passa*." But there are others, many others, who are not in such (artificially) needy circumstances—besides, persons, wide-hearted, benevolent, bold, ambitious, even amongst those who speculate in and live on architectural pursuits; and it is to those to whom we exclaim humbly, yet energetically: "speculate not on the chance and jeopardy of human life—be ashamed owning those mud and swallow-nest structures, unfit (aye, in many other respects) for the dwelling and living (?) in of human beings; set an example; restore architecture to its pristine, worthy state—not only to that of the (pagan?) Romans, but of our Christian forefathers of former centuries!" But as any (legitimate) means are legitimate for good purposes—we go still

further, and will increase our philanthropic arguments by even speculative ones. Thus, builders of theatres, halls, hotels, inns, manufactories, in fact any building, where numbers congregate, might considerably increase their notoriety, popularity (and consequently gain), if they were to state that their property is *fireproof*, the staircases of stone, etc. To allude especially to hotels, the providing of stone staircases instead of those of (well-resinous) deal, could be done in London during the summer recess, etc.

We have introduced in our former paper the name of State's Architecture (*Staat's Architektur*), and we shall find that England is far behind countries in this branch of other public welfare. Not speaking of the Secretary of State for Public Works in France—even Austria, one-sided Austria, possesses very deep official contrivances in this respect. There is the supreme Aulic commission of public buildings (*Kais. Hof-Bau-Rath*) at Vienna, with directors of building in each provincial capital; another department is superintending even the construction of canals, dikes, etc., viz. the direction of aquatic works (*Wasserbau Direktion*). In Prussia, the late ideal Schinkel was at the head of the department of public buildings.

But as England possesses, after all, already a Department (?) of Public Instruction, (every thing but the name of a distinct secretaryship of state), another department of public works is a thing not so impossible as many may imagine. But we are apprehensive, lest the *extended* (or rather mistaken) ideas of personal liberty might mar its exertions and scope. We call the hitherto current ideas of personal liberty mistaken ones, and if we come to know, that our humbler classes possess even the liberty of dying by starvation, we think we have proved our assertion by a very few words. Thus we say, in the present instance—if any person or family chose to live in a house made of *fulminate of silver*, they are welcome to do so; well understood, on some sequestered spot of Salisbury plains, or Marston Moor! But they must *not* take any lodgers or servants with them, who being either injured or distressed by fire, may become chargeable to the parish—viz. the *nation*. Personal liberty does not go so far as to get 7½ per cent., with the liberty of drawing on the public exchequer for those very accidents, which are included as it were in the obtaining of this *dividend*. Every house tenanted is worth insuring now, and can get insured. But this relates only to the *landlord*. No one seems to care, however, whether the artisan and working man, yielding the 7½ per cent., by the renting of some wretched hovel run up of wicker-work and deal, is insured or not. But if the head of the family has been burnt, or if they by the loss of furniture, tools, and other utensils, get distressed, and eventually sent to the poor-house, hospital, or prison (!)—who is, after all, the cause of all these calamities (still more so in their national aggregate) but him, who orders such structures to be erected, the artist (?) who is so unfortunate as to be compelled to execute such (?) orders.

We believe, therefore, we have broached reasons, religious, humanitarian, artistic, and politic, for dissuading people to run on in the present way of futile, low, unsafe and ugly architecture—to make them feel, in fine, that it is unworthy of a *free* people to dwell in such structures; and that a bettering, an "improvement of our social condition," inculcated even from the height of the throne, must begin somewhere—be it even in architecture.

NEW WORK ON EGYPT.—Dickinson and Son, of New Bond-street, are about to publish a collection of views of the most celebrated temples, &c. in Egypt, from drawings made on the spot in 1841, by H. Pilleau, Esq., 16th Lancers. It will comprise the following subjects:—The Island of Philæ, with a general view of its ruins; temple and propylæa on the Island of Philæ; temple of Koum Ombou; temple of Edfou; interior of the great hall of Carnac—(Thebes); ditto from a different point of view; obelisk and propylæa at Luxor—(Thebes); ruins at Luxor; the two Colossi at Thebes; temple at Medinet Abou—(Thebes); interior of the temple of Denderah; and approach to the Great Pyramids of Geza.

EXHIBITION OF WORKS OF BRITISH INDUSTRY.

THE importance of a periodical exhibition of our manufactures has been often urged and always admitted; and we are glad to learn that the Society of Arts and Manufactures are applying themselves to effect it. The following resolutions, passed at a recent meeting of the managing committee, will briefly explain the objects sought to be attained:—"1. That the experience of foreign countries has proved that great national advantages have been derived from the stimulus given to industrial skill by bringing the manufactures of different establishments into competition with each other, and by presenting honorary rewards to those who have excelled in each department; cheapness of production, and excellence of material, both in execution and durability, being assumed as the *criteria* of superiority." That by carrying out a similar principle in this country, founded on the experience of the past, but with more extensive views, still greater benefits may be anticipated.—2. That having regard to the objects promoted by the Society of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, it would appear to be their peculiar province to attempt to carry out such an object in Great Britain on a scale commensurate with the magnitude of the interests involved.—3. That immediate preparations be commenced for such a periodical exhibition of works of industry, at which the producers shall be invited to display their various productions." The details of carrying out this plan, on a comprehensive scale, were left to be considered at future meetings of the committee.

In the report read before his Royal Highness Prince Albert on the 2nd instant, when the society's rewards were distributed, this proposition was brought prominently forward. The following animated picture (extracted from one of the daily journals) representative of an exhibition of the products of national industry, will bring home to the minds of those who have never witnessed such a display, a scene of extraordinary interest—"A display of the perfection to which we have brought the mechanical arts would include every manufacture of the empire. Each producer would have his stand crowded with the choicest specimens of his skill; china from Worcester and Derby; the finest lace from Nottingham; the most splendid brocades and silks from Spitalfields, the newest patterns from Manchester, from the raw cotton to the finest manufactured produce; glass, varying in shapes, from the spun fibres, for robes and vestments, to the most superbly cut chandeliers; the produce of Birmingham, from the common cut nail, to the magnificent ormolu decorations for palaces; carpeting of brilliant patterns; a display of chronometers, watches, and clockwork; jewellery, of the rarest and most delicate devices; paper of the highest quality the mill can produce; printing in illumination and gold; cloths, of all quality and all colours; the straws of Dunstable, the ribbons of Coventry, and the crockery of Matlock; the latest locomotive—that triumph of mechanical speed; the Cornwall condensing engine—that masterpiece of economic power; models of iron steam-ships for the Atlantic; of men-of-war, for the dominion of the ocean; of merchantmen, from the ports of London, Hull, and Liverpool; the finest qualities of arms, in guns, pistols, and watered sword blades; and the choicest specimens of carving and cabinet work. Such an exhibition would include all the varieties of articles produced by the skill of the vast body of English artisans—the most ingenious, the most patient, and the most persevering in the world—in a word, everything that could render the exhibition worthy of the industrial manufacture of a mighty empire."

A considerable sum has been already subscribed by the committee towards this important object. We cannot omit this opportunity of alluding in terms of praise to the present active and excellent secretary, Mr. Francis Whishaw, who, by his energy and skill, has been mainly instrumental in restoring the vigour of youth to the ancient society of arts.